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Eliot A. Cohen

THE LONG-TERM CRISIS OF THE ALLIANCE

That the Western Alliance is undergoing one of its recurrent crises is beyond doubt: the important question is whether this crisis is different in nature and more perilous in its likely outcome than those of the past.[1] If NATO simply faces the chronic tensions of an alliance constructed of 16 members of varying size, geographic location and temperament, there is little cause for concern. The disputes of the moment—the questions of trade with the Soviet Union (including the Euro-Soviet natural gas pipeline) and European theater nuclear force (TNF) modernization—will be resolved by inelegant but workable compromises; the petty resentments of the moment will be understood as such: fits of pique which lead to the spats common to any couple, no matter how secure their marriage.

Even if we assume that the disputes are serious ones, it is possible to argue that differences between Europeans and Americans could have been avoided, and can be resolved by enlightened statesmen. In this view the disagreements are major but amenable to solution. What is needed is intensive investigation of the merits of each issue coupled with a strenuous effort by politicians to change their way of doing business. One version of this argument is that the current crisis has been produced by the gaucherie and diplomatic ineptitude of two American Presidents, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, and can be remedied if the second will only try to acquire some worldly wisdom. To continue the marital metaphor: husband and wife quarrel over where to live or what house to buy. Generosity, good sense and tact are needed—indeed, in their absence a serious breach may occur—but the dispute can be resolved on its own terms.

The third possibility, and unfortunately, the one closest to the

[1] A spectrum of opinion on this matter can be found in Stanley Hoffmann, "NATO at Thirty: Variations on Old Themes," *International Security*, Summer 1979, pp. 88–107; Robert J. Art, "Fixing Atlantic Bridges," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1982, pp. 86–104; Irving Kristol, "Does NATO Exist?" *Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 1979, pp. 45–53.

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truth, is that profound antipathies imperil the marriage. The current crisis of NATO is, in fact, a structural one, which no accommodations on such issues as the Euro-Soviet gas pipeline or TNF can solve. Forces beyond the control of any statesman, no matter how skilled or dedicated, have jeopardized the very survival of the Alliance.

To be sure, observers have, since the early 1970s, identified three developments likely to cause tension in the Atlantic Alliance: Europe's economic recovery and rivalry with the United States; the "decoupling" effects of parity in nuclear weapons between the United States and the Soviet Union; and the widely different views Americans and Europeans hold concerning the benefits and costs of détente.[2] By themselves, however, these factors do not pose a mortal threat to the Alliance. The Western economies compete as much with Japan as with the United States and, in any event, economic disputes (over steel pricing, for example) are more amenable to compromise than other issues. The strategic decoupling problem has plagued the Alliance ever since the Soviets acquired the ability to attack the United States with nuclear weapons. The effectiveness of the American nuclear guarantee to Europe has rested primarily on an admittedly uncertain, but nonetheless intimidating, prospect of American strikes to protect American troops, if no one else.

The problem of opposing views of détente is a more serious one; however, we must regard it as part of a larger problem than that of differing benefits from the relaxation of tensions between East and West. Certainly the Europeans gained more materially and psychologically from détente than did the United States. Nonetheless, détente did, after all, help the United States to contain the diplomatic damage consequent upon its withdrawal from Vietnam, to curtail some costly arms expenditures, and to allow the development of a considerable trade with the Soviet Union. Whether détente also, as its critics suggest, caused the United States to disarm psychologically is an open question. The root of the current problem, however, lies in the European belief that détente can and should continue, and the American conviction that it cannot and ought not.

If these three developments—economic rivalry, strategic parity, different views of détente—do not in and of themselves portend a crisis, why then should we think one exists? The answer lies foremost in the increasing asperity of NATO debates over a range

[2] See the lucid summary in Karl Kaiser *et al.*, *Western Security: What Has Changed? What Should Be Done?*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1981.

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of issues, a bitterness of tone which stems not from the specific disputes but from a larger sense of mistrust. On both sides of the Atlantic, unilateralists and neutralists of various hues attack the structure and spirit of the generation-old Alliance[3]

This degeneration in tone and the divergence over substance between America and Europe become most alarming when one considers the context in which they occur. Alliance disharmony has increased even as we have seen a menacing multifaceted assertion of Soviet strength: the invasion of Afghanistan; the acquisition and reinforcement of client states in Africa, the Middle East and Asia; the suppression of Poland; and the dismantling of the Soviet dissident movement. A gradual but relentless military buildup has enabled the Soviet Union to eliminate many of the strategic and tactical nuclear disadvantages under which it labored during the 1950s and 1960s. Soviet land forces have grown in size and sophistication in both the Chinese and European theaters, while a substantial strategic reserve has been enlarged. The Soviet Navy has grown from a coastal defense force to a blue water fleet, and the Soviet Union now possesses a capacity for air and sealift comparable, if yet inferior, to that of the United States.

Moreover, the crisis of the Alliance occurs despite the solutions of what initially promised to be its knottiest problems. In 1949 decolonization and German rearmament posed the greatest threats to the American-European Alliance, and yet both were achieved without visible lasting damage. None of the Alliance's leading politicians today are nearly as obstructionist as General de Gaulle, whose withdrawal of France from the integrated military structure of NATO presented a third shock to the Alliance. Nor is the notion that the past two American presidents deserve the burden of blame for the deterioration in U.S.-European relations a correct one. The current period of tension began in 1973, despite the presence in office of a President and Secretary of State who admired and advocated a version of Realpolitik familiar and congenial to Europeans. The problem worsened during the Carter years, despite the commitment of his Administration to increased allocation of American defense resources to Europe, and to such measures as coproduction of weapons. Indeed, a careful examination of the record of American administrations since the early 1970s reveals great continuity in the substance of policy, despite oscillation in the rhetoric which has presented it.

The Alliance's present crisis is a severe one. Even if we assume that the TNF modernization and Siberian natural-gas pipeline

[3] See Theodore Draper, "The Dilemma of the West," *Encounter*, March 1982, pp. 8–21.

issues are finally resolved, there is good reason to believe that a larger and perhaps fatal crisis may await us in the next two decades. To understand why this is so we must look at four long-term difficulties.

II

The greatest danger to the Alliance arises from the psychological relationship between the United States and an Old World dependent for its very survival on the arms of the New. As Raymond Aron has said, "By its very nature, Western Europe's dependence on the United States for its own defense is unhealthy."[4] Once Europe had recovered from the devastation of World War II—let us say, for the sake of convenience, by 1960—the relationship of protector and protected was likely to evoke arrogance and condescension from the one side, resentment and irresponsibility from the other. To be sure, this is hardly a novel observation. What has not been sufficiently appreciated, however, is that under these conditions the relationship will not remain constant but rather will deteriorate. The more prosperous and self-confident the Europeans become, the greater will be their petulance; the more harried the Americans feel, the greater will be their umbrage.

Two factors make the relationship all the more tense. First, the formal organization of NATO and the rhetoric which justifies it utterly belie the reality of the Alliance. "The Western Alliance is an alliance of equals. Its cohesion is therefore based on the greatest possible realization of the principles of equal risks, equal burdens, and equal security."[5] Distinguished experts assert this, but it is patently false nonetheless. 300,000 European troops do not stand guard on the Rio Grande, and the United States does not call on France or Great Britain (much less Germany or the Benelux) to bolster America's own defense by giving guarantees to wage nuclear war against the Soviet Union. The preservation of a free Europe is vital to American security, but American power is vital to European survival.

Second, despite efforts on both sides of the Atlantic to forget the history of Atlantic relations before 1945, the old perceptions—deeply rooted in both cultures—remain. Many Europeans then as today despised the vulgarity and provincialism of American culture while they feared the bluster and crudeness of American

[4] Raymond Aron, "Ideology in Search of a Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, America and the World, 1981, p. 508.

[5] Karl Kaiser *et al.*, "Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1982, p. 1161.

power. In the words of a recent British ambassador:

> It boosted and boosts European morale to spotlight American errors, to savor its failures, to exploit its market, to resent its overseas investments, to have a critic's ringside seat at its global tribulations, to mock its culture, to deride its leaders.[6]

For their part, Americans in large measure still believe in the exceptionality of their regime and its superiority to all others. In current American denunciations of the allies for failure to share the burdens of defense and for supine willingess to appease commissars and sheikhs, one hears echoes of the rhetoric of 50 or 75 years ago, when Europe was perceived as the playground of cunning and duplicitous politicians eager to entangle America in European broils.

The experience of World War II suppressed, for a time, these states of mind. Americans felt themselves more than ever part of a common Atlantic civilization threatened by two lethal strains of barbarism. Their pity for a Europe wasted by war matched European gratitude for American aid and protection, and European admiration for triumphant America's political and economic system. On both sides of the Atlantic, two generations—that which directed World War II and that which filled its armies—were profoundly affected. From their ranks came the statesmen who founded the Alliance and led it during its first quarter-century.[7]

Within the next few decades a new generation will take over, one molded not by World War II or the cold war (whose periodic Berlin crises reinforced the sense of an embattled but free Atlantic community) but by Vietnam, Watergate and the social turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Perhaps, as Josef Joffe has suggested, each country's successor generation will see its interests clearly, without "misperception or false consciousness."[8] But this is cold comfort, for the strength and stability of NATO rests as much on bonds of sentiment as on calculations of benefit.[9] A profound sense of comity has lubricated the delicate machinery of alliance. In its absence, friction will build, and the machine may come creaking to a halt.

[6] Peter Jay, quoted in Theodore Draper, "The Western Misalliance," *Washington Quarterly*, Winter 1981, p. 62.

[7] See Marion Dönhoff, "Bonn and Washington: The Strained Relationship," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1979, p. 1056.

[8] Josef Joffe, "European-American Relations: The Enduring Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1981, p. 846.

[9] See Lester B. Pearson, "Canada and the North Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1949, p. 378.

III

The second great threat to the Alliance stems from the changing nature of the Soviet challenge. The steady Soviet buildup (which began in the mid-1960s and continues today at a rate of increase of some four-and-a-half percent per year) will pose in and of itself certain threats to the Alliance. The United States (whose own force modernization was delayed by the Vietnam War, when funds went to expansion and combat replacement, not new development and acquisition) finds itself hard put to redress simultaneously the nuclear and conventional balances. The possibility that space may become a new arena of competition and the need to cope with the first threat to American naval supremacy in 40 years will place heavy demands on the American defense budget. One place to seek economies will inevitably be in forces in Europe or those committed to their reinforcement.

The Soviet buildup, however, would be less threatening were it not accompanied by an aggressive Soviet politico-military policy. The invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked a departure in Soviet policy. For the first time since World War II, Soviet troops were in action beyond the borders of the Soviet Empire. Moreover, in Cuba and, to a lesser extent, East Germany, the Soviet Union has found militarily potent clients to gain positions in Africa and, possibly, in Latin America. In the 1950s and 1960s the West feared communist subversion: now it faces the prospect of outright Soviet military intervention as well.

All this amounts to an increasingly serious threat to Western security outside the traditional NATO area. So far, at least, the European powers have been unwilling to extend NATO, while the United States feels itself hard put to cope singlehandedly with the Soviet threat. If, as can be assumed even under the new leadership, the Soviets continue to press their military advantages overseas, NATO will face two strains: a material strain on American resources leading to increasingly embittered relations if the Europeans should fail to ease that squeeze, and a deepening of mistrust should European powers attempt to maintain a continental détente in the midst of a global cold war.

Ironically, however, the Alliance will be threatened by Soviet weakness as much as by Soviet strength. The decay of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the failure of the siege economy (worsened by the cost of supporting militarily potent but economically feeble clients such as Cuba and Vietnam), the demographic problem, and the growth of unrest in Eastern Europe combine to threaten the stability, and perhaps in the long run even the existence, of

the Soviet regime and its dominions. This will make the world increasingly unstable. We can find an instructive analogy in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the start of the twentieth century, which reacted to stagnation and ethnic turmoil at home with a belligerent policy abroad.

The American and European views of the Polish crisis of 1980-1981 suggest that Americans and Europeans will react very differently to these challenges to the Soviet imperium. In essence, the Europeans cling to George F. Kennan's version of containment, hoping that if the West prevents further expansion of the Soviet Union into Europe, the Soviet regime will, after a time, mellow. The prospect of successful revolts in Eastern Europe may alarm them more than that of successful Soviet repression, for such revolts could increase the likelihood of war in Europe. In addition, like Kennan, the Europeans tend to see the U.S.S.R. more as a successor to the Tsarist regime than as a qualitatively different one. Because of this they will oppose policies which, they think, may only serve to push the new leadership toward an equally, or even more, assertive Russian-chauvinist military dictatorship.

Most Americans, on the other hand, have long viewed the conflict between East and West as one driven by ideology rather than by national ambition. Shielded by their own nuclear deterrent and menaced by Soviet-backed communist regimes in many parts of the globe (including the Caribbean), Americans may be more eager than the Europeans to work for the eventual disintegration of the Soviet empire, more willing to take political and economic steps (embargoes and the like) to hasten that day, and more willing to engage directly Soviet clients such as Cuba in order to quicken the collapse of Soviet power. For over three decades, containment has worked in some places (Europe, Iran, Korea) and not in others (Southeast Asia, Afghanistan). This is inevitable when foreign policy is based on an essentially reactive principle. If, as is possible, President Reagan's successors continue to promote a policy aimed at weakening the Soviet empire rather than parrying its periodic thrusts, the Alliance will have two fundamentally different and incompatible approaches to the central issue of Western foreign policy.

IV

It would be absurd to suggest that the turmoil in the Third World is directed by and for the purposes of Moscow. It would be wrong, however, to deny that Moscow takes advantage of such

instability, feeding it with weapons, advice and propaganda, and it would be folly to suggest that, simply because a rebellion or an invasion is not controlled by Moscow, it poses no threat to the West. It is dubious, to say the least, that Ayatollah Khomeini takes orders from the Kremlin, but that makes the Iranian revolutionary state no less a threat to American and European interests. The questions to be asked are: What is the nature of the threats to Western interests in the Third World? What resources does the Alliance have to cope with them?

To answer the second question first: during NATO's first two decades the United States could count to some extent on the colonial powers, and above all on Great Britain, to cope with extra-European threats to Western security. In the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and Africa, Britain retained not only political influence but also forces adequate to intervene where necessary—as in Kuwait in 1961. At NATO's inception it was not assumed that the United States would take on global responsibilities, but rather that it could rely heavily on British forces overseas.[10] Despite the loss of India, Britain remained the world's second naval power, retained a large and capable army and had a network of overseas bases second to none. As late as 1968 Britain played a critical politico-military role in the Persian Gulf.

But Britain did not, and indeed could not, sustain the role of the world's third major power. The brutal treatment meted out by the United States at Suez confirmed what many Britons had sensed for some time, that the British Empire was no longer a superpower. The trauma of two world wars, the inevitable enfeeblement of Commonwealth allegiances, economic decline at home, and the lack of a rationale for a global strategic network once India gained independence—all of these led Britain to willingly accept a secondary role in world affairs. The 1982 Falklands War with Argentina, despite its successful outcome, revealed how much British capabilities had shrunk since the 1950s.

The other former colonial powers, with the exception of France, retain little capacity and no inclination to intervene abroad. French resources, however, are absorbed in the management of an extensive African sphere of influence, the construction of an independent nuclear deterrent, and the maintenance of a sizable continental army as well as substantial Atlantic and Mediterranean fleets. Because of the French decision to maintain armed forces which in scope, but not size, resemble those of the super-

[10] See, for example, Henry A. Kissinger, "Military Policy and the Defense of the Grey Areas," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1955, p. 427.

powers, she possesses little surplus power, even were she prepared to cooperate openly with the United States. France is a European and an African power, but cannot, despite her claims, be a global one.

In summary, the United States has now assumed the global role which it formerly shared with the European powers—during a period when its once effortless naval supremacy has vanished and when other threats to its security (in the Caribbean and the field of strategic nuclear forces) have grown. All this would be acceptable, perhaps, if the dangers to Western security were the same or fewer than in the past. Such, however, is not the case.

The prospect of greater global instability is a certain one. Bloody coup attempts in such putatively secure Third World countries as Kenya, the potential disintegration of the Organization of African Unity, the metastasis of insurrection and civil war in Central America, and the continuing power of militant Islam—all point to a more troubled world. The new states no longer have the reality of even the recent memory of the anticolonial struggle to inspire them: instead, they face uncontrolled population growth, an uncertain world economy, a lack of national identity, and the dislocation caused by overly rapid urbanization.

As a general matter, then, the United States can expect new threats to its security to boil up in various corners of the world, including its own backyard. The most serious threat to its security and that of the entire West lies, needless to say, in the Persian Gulf. That region is vital to American security despite the fact that the United States could, in a pinch, dispense with its oil, which provides only some ten percent of U.S. needs. The economies of Europe and, above all, Japan need Persian Gulf oil to function, and the economic collapse of those countries could not help but threaten the world order the United States has sought since 1945.

The threats to the security of oil supplies are numerous and varied and have increased since the Iranian Revolution. Of these the threat of Soviet invasion of the area is one, albeit the least likely. The possibilities of Iranian assaults on the lesser Gulf states and of domestic upheaval, in Iran or elsewhere, are more serious. Here too we see a fundamental divergence between European and American views. The Europeans have argued that in most cases military force cannot secure the West's oil supplies; they have urged instead such political measures as a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Americans, on the other hand, see a need to develop a powerful interventionary force, composed of naval, land

and air elements, backed by extraordinary logistical support, to cope with the whole spectrum of threats to the region.

The Americans disagree with the Europeans not only over the utility or impotence of military force, but over the related issues of Middle East politics. The two sides differ greatly in their attitudes toward Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the modalities of Middle East diplomacy. Europeans perennially see American policy as excessively pro-Israel and heavily influenced by domestic political factors; and Americans see Europe seemingly motivated by a myopic and cowardly concern for the continuity of its oil supplies. In particular, the failure of NATO nations to support American diplomatic and, more important, military action during the October 1973 war left deep scars, and to many Americans rendered questionable the military value of having substantial bases, forces, and war stocks in Europe.

For better or worse, the American strategic and diplomatic approaches have prevailed, mainly because the Europeans are impotent to oppose them. A Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) now is expected to be made up of a 300,000-man, four-service, triphibious force of intervention, which only the United States has the resources and will to provide. The RDF would, in all probability, only be deployed if lesser, more covert forms of action (such as that undertaken by Britain in Oman during the 1970s) should fail.

Nonetheless, the RDF causes two difficulties for the Alliance. First, some of the American forces which compose it must be diverted from the mission of European defense: much of the RDF is currently allocated to European reinforcement. In the event of a confrontation with the Soviet Union which coincided with or included a crisis in the Persian Gulf, an extremely difficult choice would have to be made. Moreover, the eventual creation of an Indian Ocean fleet and the increased logistical support needed will either demand increases in the defense budget or allocation of money away from the Army and to the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, i.e., away from Europe.

Second, it will be politically difficult to use the RDF without one of two European responses. Either sizable European forces must join the RDF and fight alongside it (unlikely, given continuing European disagreements with American policy in the Arab world and the region), or the European powers must substantially relieve American forces on their own front. True enough, American intervention in the Persian Gulf would serve the American na-

tional interest whether or not European soldiers fought side by side with American troops. Such excessively rational calculations, however, would not convince the American public that their sons, husbands and brothers should die to keep French, Dutch, German and Japanese homes warm and factories running.

V

The final source of Atlantic tension arises from America's pressing need to reorder her military institutions. In retrospect, it is astonishing that this has not been done earlier, that the last great wave of military reform in the United States occurred in the late 1940s, before the shape of America's long-term politico-military position became clear. As Great Britain discovered, world power requires unique, carefully crafted and balanced military institutions, institutions quite different from those of continental powers.

The fundamental problem which American strategists must grapple with is the disproportion between America's military resources and her global political commitments. The indisputable fact of military overextension has already touched off a hot debate between "Atlanticists" on the one hand and "globalists," or "navalists," on the other.[11] During the 1860s, the first two decades of this century, and the 1920s, Great Britain found itself in a similar predicament and found it necessary to withdraw from some areas and reinforce others, to drop some friendships and cultivate new ones. In all three cases the gap between foreign commitments and the armed forces needed to honor them required profound institutional reform, the destruction of old institutions and the creation of new ones, such as the Cardwell system of regimental organization, the British Expeditionary Force, the Territorial Army, and the Committee on Imperial Defence.

The emerging debate over the Joint Chiefs of Staff system suggests that the United States is reacting similarly to a similar predicament. As many critics have pointed out, the current system assigns too much power to the individual services, too little to the Joint Staff.[12] The result is that service chiefs seek unanimity

[11] See Robert Komer, "Maritime Strategy vs. Coalition Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1982, p. 1124–44; Stansfield Turner and George Thibault, "Preparing for the Unexpected: The Need for a New Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1982, pp. 122–35.

[12] Even elements in the Navy, traditionally the most independent of the services, have come around to this view. See the May, June, July, and August 1982 issues of *Armed Forces Journal International*.

through compromise and incremental change. A powerful Joint Staff could be expected to take a more global point of view, to grapple with such questions as whether the Army should consist in the main of "heavy" divisions to fight in Europe, or "light" divisions to fight elsewhere, whether the Navy should consist primarily of forces designed to protect convoys of troops heading for Europe, or whether it should be designed to win command of the sea and project force ashore.

In short, the effort to fashion a coherent American military policy in an age of increased threats, whether it results in a new Joint Chiefs of Staff system or not, will highlight the disproportionality of American commitments to NATO, and the role which inertia, rather than foresight, has played in this respect. This attempt is already under way, and indeed has already had the effect of strengthening those services least involved in the European theater: the Marine Corps and the Navy. The rise of relatively well-informed civilian critics of the defense establishment, politicians such as Senator Gary Hart and journalists such as James Fallows, who cogently deplore particular policies, rather than abstractions such as "the military-industrial complex," has made the American public aware that difficult choices must be made. The quiet emergence of a new generation of professional military intellectuals, such as Admiral Stansfield Turner and Colonel Harry G. Summers, suggests that the military as well is preparing to grapple with such problems.

This upcoming reorientation of America's defenses, necessary though it is, poses obvious dangers to the Alliance, and, indeed, it is vital that the incipient battle between Atlanticists and globalists be toned down. The Atlanticists would have America maintain her current type and level of commitment to Europe and thus follow a policy which, as we have argued above, will lead to the collapse of the Alliance they rightly seek to preserve. The globalists would have America unilaterally and radically devalue the Alliance and thereby bring her, unwillingly but inevitably, to the same result. In either case America would suffer a severe defeat, for all must admit that the European Alliance has been the keystone of her postwar foreign policy. The globalists are correct in thinking that the United States must recast its deployments and force structures; they are wrong in thinking that it can do so without the most careful effort to preserve and revitalize NATO.

The debate over America's force structure—"heavy" versus "light" divisions, for example—will likely remain a constricted one, conducted mainly in professional forums. The question of conscription, however, will at some point spill into the voting

booth, the courtroom, and perhaps the streets. Opposition to a peacetime draft—certainly to a draft of the kind that requires two years of military service anywhere in the world—is deeply rooted in American political culture.[13] Moreover, as a purely prudential matter, the lessons of Vietnam and the French and British overseas experience (the Falklands War, for example) would seem to indicate that volunteer professional armies are best suited for the small wars which a world power must fight. And yet, the sheer size of America's active forces—which today number more in relation to population than those of West Germany—coupled with the shrinking recruiting base of draft-age young men (from 8,800,000 18 to 21 year olds in 1979 to only 7,500,000 in 1988) suggests that either force levels must be cut, or the draft reintroduced. This issue will become especially acute if the current Reagan five-year defense program, which envisages a substantial increase in military personnel, stays on course.

To be sure, the Defense Department has met current recruiting goals, thanks in large measure to economic recession. Nonetheless, the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), particularly the Army, has yet to attract the same percentage of well-educated young men that it did during the draft period. The relatively low enlistment quotas have created an Army incapable of fighting even a small war without a reserve mobilization—a time-consuming, awkward and politically difficult task. In addition, unlike its European allies, the United States lacks a substantial reserve of trained men to fill the ranks in the event of a protracted or large-scale conventional war.

The combination of shrinking age cohorts, economic prosperity and a more traditional (i.e., restricted) use of women in the armed forces will force the United States to choose among three options: a draft, a decrease in the size of the Army, and an across-the-board cut in manpower levels. The last seems unlikely, given the current consensus in favor of a large air force and naval expansion. When the choice is made, as it must be in the next few years, there will be numerous voices raised to call for the withdrawal of divisions from Europe and the reduction of forces slated for wartime deployment there, instead of a return to the draft. These voices will carry political weight. Many Europeans cannot understand American opposition to conventional conscription, for they confuse with mere shirking what is, in fact, part of a long and powerful tradition. Similarly, they will underestimate the prudential arguments against a return to the draft, which rest on the

[13] I will address this question in my forthcoming book, *Systems of Military Service: The Dilemmas of a Liberal-Democratic World Power*, Cornell University Press.

need to fight small wars and the problem of how to democratically select and indemnify conscripts—the problem, in other words, of "who serves when not all serve." European insensitivity to America's peculiar traditions and needs, however, are matched by a corresponding American unawareness that for most countries, including all European countries save Britain, a serious defense policy is inconceivable without a draft

VI

To summarize the argument thus far: the Alliance is imperiled by a number of structural contradictions and adverse long-term trends. The leaders of the West can only seek to ameliorate the threats to the Alliance as currently constructed; they cannot eliminate them. Indeed, recent experience suggests that it can be counterproductive to try. We have seen a paradoxical deterioration in American-European relations at the same time as (and in some measure because of) a substantial *increase* in America's military commitment to NATO. In the past ten years Republican and Democratic administrations have implemented three such policies aimed at bolstering NATO's conventional defense: increased allocation of American active and reserve forces to the reinforcement of Europe in the event of war; NATO (as opposed to European) weapons standardization; and modernization of tactical and theater nuclear weapons.[14] What have been the consequences?

The first, the increased earmarking of American reserve and active forces stationed in the United States to wartime deployment in Europe, has had little or no visible effect on U.S.-European relations. The United States now has duplicate sets of equipment for two divisions warehoused in Europe, and will soon have enough for two more. NATO military planners may rest easier as a result, but there is no indication that these measures have improved political relations. NATO standardization policy, on the other hand, particularly in its more extreme forms, has increased Alliance mistrust.[15] When several European nations "standardize" on an American fighter (the F-16), they do so at the expense of a European one (a *Mirage* or possibly a *Tornado*). A professed adherence to standardization aroused expectations of a "two-way street" in arms sales which, because of a host of military and domestic political factors, could never be achieved: examples here are America's cancellation of the *Roland* surface-to-air missile and the failure to purchase a European tank.

[14] See Robert Komer, "Treating NATO's Self-Inflicted Wound," *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1973–74, pp. 37–48.

[15] I have discussed this at greater length in "NATO Standardization: The Perils of Common Sense." *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1978, pp. 72–90.

The third policy, the modernization of U. S. tactical and theater nuclear weapons in Europe, has led to several acrimonious popular and governmental disputes between the United States and its European allies. The public outcry in Europe in 1978 over the proposed deployment in Europe of enhanced radiation warheads ("neutron bombs") is but one example of how an attempt to strengthen European defenses led to American mistrust of European resolve, and European suspicions of an American overreadiness to fight a war—even a nuclear war—in their homeland. As of this writing, the Europeans still refuse to accept the stationing of American neutron bombs on their soil. Meanwhile, Europeans came to see TNF modernization (originally urged by former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, in 1977) as an attempt by the United States to impose unwanted nuclear weaponry on its European allies—a disquieting misreading of recent history, to say the least.

Thus, policies intended to increase the capacity of the West to deter and resist a conventional Soviet onslaught have, perversely, weakened the cohesion of the Alliance. Even the 1978 agreement to increase defense budgets by a steady three percent (in real terms) per year produced more friction than strength. Why has this been the case?

To be sure, the Allies must strengthen their conventional position in Europe, a position threatened by the steady numerical growth of Warsaw Pact forces and the equally steady improvement in their quality. Nonetheless, Americans and Europeans can redress the conventional imbalance if, and only if, they deal with the more fundamental problem—the calcification of an Alliance whose anatomy was formed by the conditions of the late 1940s. The three policies referred to above only exacerbated the discrepancies between the realities of American and European political, economic and cultural positions on the one hand, and their combined military policy on the other. What is required, therefore, is a thorough reconsideration of the purposes and institutions of the Alliance—a restructuring of NATO.

The difficulty of such an enterprise is enormous. Statesmen find it easiest to treat crises symptomatically, attempting to resolve particular issues as they arise. During periods of relative tranquillity, they may reasonably argue that it is foolhardy to tamper with the status quo, to take bold and risky measures to avert the Alliance's destruction in a decade's time. The great danger, however, is that the mortal blow could fall suddenly, before statesmen were able to parry it. NATO would face just such a terminal crisis if the United States felt it necessary to intervene suddenly in the

Persian Gulf while the European allies looked on with alarm or, worse, disdain.

A restructuring of NATO should not only seek to avert the collapse of the Alliance, but also to give it new resilience; it should be an effort to restore a sound foundation to Western (not simply American) security policy, not a reluctant concession to circumstances. The essential terms of the redefinition of NATO should be that the United States will concentrate on global responsibilities, Europe, on regional ones: the geographical position and strength of the former fit it for extra-European tasks, and the traditions and wealth of the Europeans suit them for the preeminent role in their own defense.

Neither side would expect major support from the other in their respective areas of responsibility, save in the event of a protracted and intense conventional war. NATO would thus be confined to its present geographical area, but within NATO the United States would play substantially less of a role on the ground than heretofore. Similarly, no efforts to formalize or intensify joint action outside the traditional NATO area would be made, although the informal and ad hoc kinds of cooperation which, thus far at any rate, have succeeded in Lebanon and the Persian Gulf, would continue. Indeed, the very absence of European (as opposed to national) commitments outside the NATO area may foster such useful cooperation.

In trimming America's military commitment to Europe, it is important to remember the strategically sensible and politically defensible purpose of American forces in Europe. They are, and have always been, a symbol to friend and foe of a willingness to wage war, even nuclear war, in defense of our European allies. The American public and its leaders have never questioned this role: they have, however, criticized the vaguer one of playing a leading part in Europe's conventional defense on the ground. This role has come under attack by way of the Mansfield Amendment of the early 1970s, more recently in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*,[16] and on the floor of the Senate, where Assistant Senate Majority leader Ted Stevens (R.-Alaska) has received support from conservatives and liberals for a move to withdraw troops from Europe. The recent vote (by a 12-to-1 margin) of a Senate appropriations subcommittee to fix American troop strength in Europe at 1980 levels—in effect reducing current strength by 15,000 men—suggests that a large American ground commitment will come under public attack soon, and perhaps this time successfully.

[16] David P. Calleo, "Inflation and American Power," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1981, pp. 781–812.

A comparison with America's only other frontline overseas commitment, that to South Korea, is an instructive one. Despite the profound cultural differences between the two countries, and despite the presence of an unstable and brutal military dictatorship in Seoul, there has been no popular agitation for withdrawal of troops from there, although President Jimmy Carter proposed a draw-down nonetheless. In Korea since 1953, unlike Europe since 1945, American troops have been killed by the other side. The prospect of a shooting war there has been far more real than in Europe, and yet there has been no Asian equivalent of a Mansfield Amendment. Why?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that American land forces in Korea consist of one scant division—enough to ensure that Americans will fight for South Korean independence with all means necessary. The South Korean forces consist of 21 divisions plus auxiliary troops, and South Korea spends as great a—indeed, until recently, a greater—percentage of its gross national product on defense as the United States (over 5.5 percent). By contrast, the Netherlands spends 3.4 percent, Germany, 3.2 percent and even France, only 3.9 percent.[17] This is not to suggest that American leaders can or should browbeat their European counterparts to reach South Korean levels of military mobilization. It *is* to suggest the sole set of circumstances under which America can sustain her current commitment to Europe, without condescension and resentment on one side, and peevish irresponsibility on the other. If Europe builds up her conventional forces as part of a general reallocation of burdens, rather than as a result of American nagging, mutual trust and cooperation can be restored or, indeed, strengthened.

A restructuring of NATO cannot, therefore, confine itself to a statement of new and different principles of alliance: real and substantial changes must be made in force structures and deployments. As it stands now, the United States keeps a ground force in Europe of some 220,000 men, and between two-thirds and three-quarters of America's active army is preparing to fight there. Now, the Europeans possess the wealth, manpower and skills to raise another dozen divisions, and have, in addition, the inestimable advantage of proximity to the battlefield. Our permanent conventional ground forces in Europe (as opposed to our air force of some 75,000 men, which should remain constant) could be reduced to an armored force of perhaps two divisions plus support, or 100,000 men, stationed in the front line as a guarantee of

[17] Figures taken from *The Military Balance 1981–1982*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982, pp. 112–3.

America's willingness to wage war on Europe's behalf. America's air and nuclear forces would remain on the continent, and perhaps even be augmented.

How much reinforcement of the Central Front the United States can or should promise its NATO allies is a difficult question, well beyond the scope of this article. One possibility might be an agreement to provide large-scale reinforcements in the event of protracted war. The United States could meet this commitment in a number of ways, including the adoption of a Swedish type of draft, which would obligate most young Americans to some eight months of training followed by five or six years of reserve duty. If this happened, the active American army could recede to a smaller, but more efficient and readier, force of some 600,000 men, as opposed to 800,000 today.

As the United States reduces its land commitment to Europe, it should develop its ability to fight elsewhere, particularly in the Persian Gulf. It should amass greater air and sea lift to ensure that the Rapid Deployment Force is indeed rapidly deployable, and establish a fifth fleet permanently deployed in the Indian Ocean, rather than one composed (as at present) of detachments from other fleets. The creation of such a fleet, and the resumption of a limited liability draft, would demonstrate that America was not casting off old obligations but reordering them, and striving to meet the most pressing.

In return, Western Europe could assume the greater responsibility for creating an effective conventional defense against the Warsaw Pact. As in the case of a new American fleet or militia-type draft, the symbolic effects of a division of labor should reinforce the practical ones: thus, the possibility of appointing a European Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) should be explored. At a more practical level, America would forebear from competing in Europe with Europe's fledgling supranational arms industry, and might even lend technical assistance (e.g., sale or gift to Europe of medium-range ballistic missile or cruise missile technology) to the creation of Anglo-German or Anglo-Franco-German long-range theater nuclear forces.

More important by far than any particular policy, however, is the necessity for a new and healthier understanding of the purposes, and, equally important, the limits of NATO. To disarm the psychological and cultural tensions outlined earlier, Americans must know that their allies will assume almost all of the burden of their own conventional defense, freeing the United States for global tasks. The Europeans must rid themselves of their resent-

ment of American power and its uses by, insofar as they can, emancipating themselves from American protection. By discarding the pretense of international political equality, and seeking to reduce the reality of military disparity, Europe and the United States may renew and indeed strengthen their peculiar generation-old marriage of sentiment and interest.

VII

A restructuring of NATO can only come about as a product of prolonged negotiation and consultation. Because the crisis is a structural one, we ought not—and need not—plunge into hasty measures to counteract it: there is a case for waiting for better economic conditions before asking for a substantial increase in European land forces.

Nonetheless, Europeans and Americans must not confuse amelioration of the symptoms—resolution of TNF disputes, for example—with a cure of the disease. To restructure NATO successfully, statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic must first fully comprehend the depth of the long-term crisis and the very real possibility of a precipitous and disastrous disintegration of the Alliance. Thereafter we will all need courage and imagination of the same epic quality that went into the formation of the Alliance in the first place. This suggests at once the seriousness of the predicament, and real, if slim, hope for its resolution.